

I CLAIM:

1. A method of creating a trust over a computer network, comprising the steps of:  
receiving, over the computer network, an electronic request to create a trust  
from a grantor, the request including identification information regarding the grantor, a  
trustee, and a beneficiary of the trust;

5 receiving, over the computer network, authorization to electronically convey  
funds to an educational account within a trust;

then storing, in a trust account database and associated with the trust  
account, information regarding the grantor, the beneficiary, and the conveyed funds;

10 receiving a response from the trustee, over the computer network,  
comprising confirmation that the trustee accepts trustee responsibilities for the trust;

electronically establishing an educational account naming the beneficiary as  
the beneficiary of the educational account; and

15 responsive to receiving a request from the trustee, over the computer  
network, to transfer funds to the educational account, electronically transferring funds to the  
educational account.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises the Internet.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the educational account comprises a Qualified  
Tuition Plan.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the educational account comprises an  
Educational Individual Retirement Account.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeatedly receiving, over the computer network, authorizations to electronically convey funds to the educational account; and

responsive to receiving each authorization, electronically transferring funds to the educational account.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the authorizations comprise rebates from sellers of goods and services.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a contribution request from a donor party over the computer network; and

receiving, from the donor party over the computer network, authorization to electronically convey funds from the donor party to the trust account.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the donor party is a person other than the trustee and other than the grantor.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving, over the computer network, a request from the trustee for a distribution of assets from the educational account;

receiving confirmation from the trustee that a purpose of the distribution is a qualified educational expense; and

electronically transferring assets from the educational account.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

determining whether the distribution results in a tax liability.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

prior to the storing step, operating a computer to analyze the identification information to confirm the grantor's identity.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving, from the grantor over the computer network, identification information regarding at least one nominated trustee;

after the storing step, contacting the trustee over the computer network to request confirmation that the trustee accepts trustee responsibilities for the trust;

receiving a response from the trustee, over the computer network, comprising additional identification information regarding the trustee and confirmation that the trustee accepts trustee responsibilities for the trust, operating the computer to analyze the identification information to confirm the trustee's identity; and

then storing, in the trust account database and associated with the trust account, information regarding the trustee.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

after the operating step confirms the trustee's identity, assigning a username and password for the trustee;

then, in response to receiving the username and password over the computer network as a login request, authorizing the trustee to manage the conveyed funds in the trust account by commands communicated over the computer network;

combining stored information associated with the trust account into a taxing authority form; and

responsive to receiving an authorization from the trustee over the computer network, communicating the taxing authority form over the computer network to a taxing authority.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

after the combining step, and prior to receiving the authorization from the trustee, communicating the taxing authority form to the trustee, over the computer network, for review.

14. A method of maintaining an account for a beneficiary, over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

receiving, from a plurality of contributors over the computer network, authorization to electronically convey funds to the account;

5 for each authorization, receiving the conveyed funds in the form of electronic payments; and

storing, in an account database and associated with the account, information regarding the conveyed funds.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

authorizing an authorized party to manage the conveyed funds in the account by commands communicated over the computer network.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

responsive to online requests from an authorized party, establishing at least one investment account with a financial institution; and

5 also responsive to online requests from the authorized party, conveying funds from the account to a selected investment account.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

authorizing an authorized party to manage the conveyed funds in the account by commands communicated over the computer network.

18. A method of managing an educational account in a trust vehicle over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

receiving, over the computer network, identification information regarding a trust, including a grantor, a trustee, and a beneficiary of the trust;

5 receiving, over the computer network, authorization to electronically convey funds to an educational account within the trust;

then storing, in a trust account database and associated with the trust account, information regarding the grantor, the beneficiary, and the conveyed funds;

10 receiving a response from the trustee, over the computer network, comprising confirmation that the trustee accepts trustee responsibilities for the trust;

electronically establishing an educational account naming the beneficiary as the beneficiary of the educational account; and

15 responsive to receiving a request from the trustee, over the computer network, to transfer funds to the educational account, electronically transferring funds to the educational account.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the computer network comprises the Internet.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the educational account comprises a Qualified Tuition Plan.

21. The method of claim 18, wherein the educational account comprises an Educational Individual Retirement Account.

22. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

repeatedly receiving, over the computer network, authorizations to electronically convey funds to the educational account; and

5 responsive to receiving each authorization, electronically transferring funds to the educational account.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the authorizations comprise rebates from sellers of goods and services.

24. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

receiving a contribution request from a donor party over the computer network; and

receiving, from the donor party over the computer network, authorization to  
5 electronically convey funds from the donor party to the trust account.

25. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

receiving, over the computer network, a request from the trustee for a distribution of assets from the educational account;

receiving confirmation from the trustee that a purpose of the distribution is a  
5 qualified educational expense; and

electronically transferring assets from the educational account.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:

determining whether the distribution results in a tax liability.

27. A method of managing assets to be used for the education of a beneficiary, comprising the steps of:

establishing an account database entry corresponding to a tax-favored educational account;

5 establishing an account with an institution corresponding to the account database entry, naming a trust as the owner of the account;

transferring funds into the account; and

distributing funds from the account to the beneficiary.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the tax-favored educational account is a Qualified Tuition Plan.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein the tax-favored educational account is an Educational Individual Retirement Account.

30. The method of claim 27, further comprising:  
receiving, over a computer network, an authorization to electronically convey funds to the tax-favored educational account; and  
responsive to receiving the authorization, electronically transferring funds to  
5 the tax-favored educational account.

31. The method of claim 27, further comprising:  
receiving, over a computer network, an authorization to electronically convey funds to the trust; and  
responsive to receiving the authorization, electronically transferring funds to  
5 the tax-favored educational account.

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